

# Waterbury Probate Records

## Types of probate records

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Clerks of the probate courts in Connecticut copied important documents into large record books. This process was not a literal word-for-word transcription but involved a certain amount of discretion in terms of editing. If you are looking for documents pertaining to an estate, you have the option of viewing the record books, which we have here at the Silas Bronson Library, or visiting the Connecticut State Library to view the original estate documents. You may, in fact, want to check both. Typically, an inventory of an estate that may go on for several pages will have been abbreviated in the record book to show only the major assets.

There are nine volumes that are still held in the vault at the Waterbury Probate Court (volumes #69, 88, 96, 106, 145, 187, 204, 232, and 268) for reasons of confidentiality. For instance, volume 88 was devoted to adoptions. This means that, while adoptions are recorded in our index, the actual records are at the Court. In order to get access to them, the patron would have to write a letter to the Chief Clerk or probate Judge (see address below). In the letter, the patron must explain why he or she has a substantial need to view the documents. It would be up to the Judge to grant permission. Note that the Court may charge a fee for copies of documents.

Example: Victoria visited the Waterbury Probate Court seeking her grandmother's adoption records. She believes her grandmother was adopted at birth, which would have been in 1919. The clerk refers her to the Bronson Library. We need the child's birth name in order to look her up in the index. As it turns out, Victoria knows the name, which was M\_\_\_\_\_ G\_\_\_\_\_. Using volume 3 of the index, the librarian finds the entry for M\_\_\_\_\_ G\_\_\_\_\_. The adoption agreement is in volume 88, pages 238-240. (Why couldn't they have told Victoria about this document while she was at the Court? Why was she referred to us? Because their index only goes back to 1940. We have the only extant index for the relevant time

period.) Adoption records are treated with greater confidentiality than other probate matters, which is why volume 88 has been retained by the Court. Victoria would need to write a letter to the Judge, as explained above.

### **Dates of Coverage**

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As to the records books housed here at the Silas Bronson Library, coverage spans 1779 to 1979. Beginning in 1980, the Waterbury Probate Court began microfilming its records. The microfilm is housed at the Court.

The records available at the State Library include the years 1779 to 1945. This means that our records are actually more extensive than the State Library's in terms of the time period.

### **Indexing**

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There is a four-volume index which covers the collection from the 1780's to 1930. While we have the actual records through 1979, we lack an index for anything after 1930. Sometime around 1940, the Waterbury Probate Court adopted a new indexing procedure using index cards. They still have those cards, and they are the only way to find documents from 1940 and subsequent years. Unfortunately, at the present time, there is no index covering the 10-year period from 1930 to 1940.

### **Requesting copies of probate records**

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The older volumes are bound books which cannot safely be inverted onto copy machines. For this reason, we encourage patrons to bring in digital cameras in order to take photographs of pages as desired. As to the newer volumes that allow for removal of individual pages, the library staff can make photocopies on request. The fee for photocopies or scanned images is \$2 per page.

## Outside agencies

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### Waterbury Probate Court

49 Leavenworth St.  
Waterbury, CT 06702  
Telephone: 203-755-1127  
Fax: 203-597-0824

### [Connecticut State Library](#)

231 Capitol Av.  
Hartford, CT 06106  
Telephone: 860-757-6500 or toll-free 866-886-4478

Within the State Archives, Record Group 4 covers Probate Court records. Here is a list of what is available for Waterbury Probate Court:

- Original Estate papers for the years 1779 through 1945 (*adoptions not included*);
- Microfilm for the years 1779 through 1880; and
- Microfilm of record books for the years 1779 through 1916.

The State Library created several very helpful informational web pages about probate records:

### [“Research Guide to Probate Records at the Connecticut State Library”](#)

This page is a great source for anyone who would like to understand more about how the probate court system evolved in Connecticut from colonial times to the present. Several of the books mentioned on this page, such as *Manwaring’s Digest* and *Hoadly’s Records of the Colony and Plantation of New Haven*, are in the Bronson Library’s Genealogy Collection.

### [“Waterbury Probate Court, 1779-1945 \(RG 004:151\)”](#)

This is a good source of information about the history of the Waterbury Probate Court, when it was founded and which municipalities it served. It

also explains what types of Waterbury records are available at the State Library and how to get access to them.

["Microfilm of Connecticut Records at LDS Family History Centers"](#)

It may be more convenient for many patrons, especially those residing outside of Connecticut, to do their research at an LDS Family History Center rather than having to travel to the Connecticut State Library or contact the staff here at the Bronson Library. This web page, updated in 2013, explains which Connecticut probate records have been microfilmed.

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